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MONTHLY ACTIVITIES REPORT
GREAT MEADOWS NWR COMPLEX
February 1998

A. Highlights

- ★ Refuge Operations Specialist Sharon Ware is selected as the recipient of the 1998 Refuge Employee of the Year Award by the National Wildlife Refuge Association (Section E.8)

B. Climatic Conditions

- Weather this month has been mild and rainy. Water levels in the marsh at Weir Hill are approaching "lake" level and at Concord are approaching the top of the dikes.

C. Land Acquisition

1. Fee Title

- On February 6, Project Leader Oliveira and Acquisition Biologist Melberg met with Engineers from the Town of Billerica to review two tracts of land which the refuge is planning to purchase from the Sudbury Valley Trustees. The tracts of land are a potential site for the Town to place gravity feed sewer lines if and when they convert the area from septic tanks.
- Justine Uritam of the Upper Charles River Conservation, Inc. contacted the refuge to invite Project Leader Oliveira to speak to their Board of Directors regarding acquisition potential for the Service in the Upper Charles River basin. Oliveira and Realty Chief Andrew French will meet with the board on March 6.
- Dr. Manone, a landowner on the Upper Charles River who is seeking to will 35 acres and a new 4,500 square foot house to a conservation organization, called and invited Project Leader Oliveira to meet with him. A March 13 meeting has been set. Oliveira along with Acting Assistant Regional Director for Refuges and Wildlife Tony Leger and Realty Chief French will also attend.
- Project Leader Oliveira and Deputy Project Leader Kennedy met with Paul Miller from the Nashawtuc Country Club to discuss potential refuge acquisition of club lands. Three tracts were identified for purchase and the information forwarded to Realty Specialist Anna Wharton. This process will also clear up a problem with a Right of Way the Service has and which has been built over by the club. The club will move the ROW to allow the Service access to their lands.
- Project Leader Oliveira was in contact with Lesley Kane, Director of the Federal and Legislative Office for the Trust for Public Lands to discuss areas of potential acquisition

within the Complex. Ms. Kane is arranging a conference call among her and members of the organization and Realty Chief French and Project Leader Oliveira to discuss issues.

- The Service accepted an option of the 15.5% undivided interest in 278.33 acres of Tract 269a-e at Mashpee NWR. This represents the remainder of the Bufflehead Bay parcel.

2. Easements

3. Other

- On February 3, Project Leader Oliveira worked with Acquisition Biologist Mary Varteresian to update the Complex's LAPS submission.
- We received word from the Navy that they are preparing a scope of work to remove the unexploded ordnance, address the underground storage tank and seal off pipes which are protruding from the ground on Nomans Land Island. This action is in response to a letter they received from Senator Edward Kennedy (MA) requesting they clean up the island prior to transfer to the Service. Senator Kennedy followed up the letter with a personal meeting with the Secretary of the Navy. The refuge is coordinating meetings with the Chilmark Conservation Commission for an upcoming prescribed burn to allow the Navy to access the approximately 260 tons of ordnance which is to be removed. A general public meeting is being planned to provide information to the communities of Chilmark and Gay Head on the transfer process and to answer questions relating to depleted uranium rounds which the Navy has been accused of using on the island.
- Senator Kennedy and Congressman Marty Meehan (MA-5) sent a letter to the Acting Secretary of the Army requesting that the Army seal the 50+ ammunition bunkers, remove the razor wire, remove asbestos from buildings and demolish the buildings prior to transferring the Sudbury Annex to the Service.
- Roger Perkins of FEMA contacted Project Leader Oliveira to inform him that the agreed upon boundaries for lands to be transferred to FEMA at the Sudbury Annex were now not agreeable. He stated that the setback from the road was too excessive. The setbacks were established to allow for public safety when using the refuge. Oliveira contacted Senator Kennedy's staff who spoke with the Regional Director of FEMA. A few days later, Pat McAnn of FEMA contacted Oliveira and apologized for others interfering with the agreement and that he wanted to go back to the original agreement. A meeting to hammer out an MOU is scheduled for early March.
- Project Leader Oliveira was contacted by Steve Gagnon of the Corps of Engineers to inquire about progress in negotiations between the Complex and FEMA over lands at the Sudbury Annex. Oliveira briefed him and Mr. Gagnon mentioned that the Natick Labs were intending to keep their buildings at the Annex. The Labs run an unmanned ultra light from a grassy field in the middle of the property. Oliveira informed Mr. Gagnon that a national wildlife refuge does not allow airports in the middle of them and that no one from

the Army or the Natick Labs has ever contacted him on this issue. Mr. Gagnon said he would check into the issue (he was quick to offer this after Oliveira informed him that he intended to run his bulldozer through the hangar :-). Oliveira has contacted Refuges/Realty to determine if anyone is aware of this issue.

D. Planning

1. Master Plan

2. Management Plan

- Final revisions to the annual plan for management on Monomoy NWR were completed on February 3 and submitted to the Secretary of the Interior through the Director. The plan was approved and on February 26 provided to the offices of Senators Kennedy and John Kerry and Congressman William Delahunt.

3. Public Participation

4. Compliance with Environmental Mandates

- The State DEM exempted the refuge from its water testing requirements based upon usage. This had been a lengthy process to achieve.

5. Research and Investigations

- Dr. Michael Topin of the University of Massachusetts at Lowell contacted Project Leader Oliveira about the possibility of doing baseline data collection on small mammals on lands within the Complex. A meeting has been set for early March with Dr. Topin to discuss this possibility.
- USGS/BRD agreed to conduct preliminary investigations on Monomoy during this field season.
- Mariamne Weights, a local researcher, has been given permission to study red squirrels at Weir Hill. The study will involve monitoring track in fresh snow.

E. Administration

1. Personnel

- Pam Hess of the R.I. Refuge Complex was selected as the Supervisory Outdoor Recreation Planner for the Great Meadows NWR Complex. A late April starting date is planned.

- A farewell dinner was held on February 13 for Refuge Operations Specialist Tammy Kimbrough and her husband David. Tammy is leaving the Service due to her husband's transfer to North Carolina. Her last day at the refuge was February 26. She will be on annual leave and then placed in leave without pay status for the near future. There are currently no plans to replace Tammy as the Regional Office has decided not to fill this position.
- A vacancy announcement for a Laborer position at Great Meadows was advertised in February. The refuge is awaiting a cert from personnel.
- Vacancy announcements for 2 temporary, seasonal biological technicians and a temp., seasonal park ranger at Monomoy were advertised this month. The final selections were forwarded to the Regional Office for approval on February 18.

2. Youth Programs

3. Other Manpower Programs

- Assistant Regional Director for External Affairs Spence Conley contacted Project Leader Oliveira regarding the possibility of a journalism intern at the Complex. The Complex has at least six brochures scheduled for revisions and numerous other projects which would benefit from someone with writing skills. ARD Conley contacted Ms. Kelli Murphy, a professor from Northeastern University and a meeting is set for March 6. An interview with a potential candidate is scheduled for the same day.

4. Volunteer Program

5. Funding

6. Safety

- Deputy RM Kennedy marked an open culvert that was discovered at Oxbow NWR. A cap for the culvert will be ordered.
- An asbestos detection survey has been scheduled for the Strand House for March 2.
- On February 2, David Henley, East Middlesex Mosquito Control Board reported the results of the 1997 Deer Tick Survey. He said deer ticks were found in Sudbury (on Water Row rd., within the refuge), but it was unknown if the ticks found were infected with the Lyme-disease organism. He alerted us to this information, as the news media was about to release the report.
- A two-day XRF Training session for both lead and asbestos assessment, sponsored by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, has been scheduled at Great Meadows for March 30

and 31. Service staff is invited to attend.

7. Technical Assistance

8. Other Items

- We received word on February 26 that Refuge Operations Specialist Ware has been chosen as the recipient of the 1998 Refuge Employee of the Year by the National Wildlife Refuge Association. Sharon will receive the award at the North American Wildlife Conference in Orlando, Florida in late March. Congratulations Sharon!
- Star Awards were given to Refuge Operations Specialist Kimbrough for her sustained high level of work at the Complex, and to Refuge Operations Specialist Ware and Biological Technician Megyesi for their work on the Monomoy project.
- On-the-Spot awards were given to Deputy Project Leader Kennedy and Ecological Services Endangered Species Biologist Anne Hecht for their work on the Monomoy project.
- Administrative Technicians Claire Forbes and Peggy Hobbs attended the Administrative Workshop which was held at the National Conservation Training Center on February 23 - 27.

F. Habitat Management

1. General
2. Wetlands
3. Forests
4. Croplands
5. Grasslands
6. Other Habitats
7. Grazing
8. Haying
9. Fire Management
10. Pest Control

11. Water Rights
12. Wilderness and Special Areas
13. WPA Easement Monitoring

G. Wildlife

1. Wildlife Diversity
2. Endangered and/or Threatened Species
3. Waterfowl
 - State of Massachusetts, Division of Fish and Wildlife biologists assisted the refuge by replacing damaged wood duck boxes along the perimeter of the Concord impoundments. A total of 31 boxes are in the pools.
4. Marsh and Water Birds
5. Shorebirds, Gulls, Terns and Allied Species
6. Raptors
7. Other Migratory Birds
8. Game Mammals
9. Marine Mammals
10. Other Resident Wildlife
11. Fisheries Resources
12. Wildlife Propagation and Stocking
13. Surplus Animal Disposal
14. Scientific Collections
15. Animal Control
16. Marking and Banding

17. Disease Prevention and Control

H. Public Use

1. General

- On February 3, Deputy RM Kennedy attended the Concord collaborative "Thoreau and Friends" with managers and educators from the historic and natural history sites in and around the Town of Concord. The group is developing a coordinated approach for high school students to visit the sites in the Town. The Concord Unit of Great Meadows is one of the sites.
- On February 4, Deputy RM Kennedy met with Carol Petrow, affiliated with the Sudbury Conservation Commission, regarding 504 handicap accessibility at the refuge. They discussed accessible trails, buildings and services the refuge provides. The Town seeks to coordinate its accessible services with those of the refuge.
- On February 5 the Monomoy Outreach Group met at Great Meadows to discuss the 1998 season, media tours, fact sheet revisions, and other outreach efforts.
- This month, during normal office hours 40 visitors came to the Visitor Center. One group of visitors came from a middle school in the surrounding area. They were doing sampling at Hop brook and decided to visit the Great Meadows Visitor Center to look at the displays.

2. Outdoor Classrooms - Students

3. Outdoor Classrooms - Teachers

4. Interpretive Foot Trails

5. Interpretive Tour Routes

6. Interpretive Exhibits/Demonstrations

- ROS Ware participated in the 1998 High School Marine Environmental Symposium at Massachusetts Maritime Academy on February 27-28. A slide program on wildlife management at Monomoy and an information table was included. Friends of Monomoy assisted.
- On February 6, ORP Donaldson gave a Bird Banding program to a Girl Scout troupe. Using a bird banding kit, literature, and a banded decoy, the group learned the history of bird banding, how it is done, and why.

7. Other Interpretive Programs

- Project Leader Oliveira was interviewed for an article which appeared in the Concord (MA) Journal.
- On February 7, 1998, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., The 4th Annual Owl Prowl was held at the Weir Hill Visitor Center. ORP Donaldson hosted the event and Volunteer Jill Miller lead the program and walk. Attendance came to 44 people; 38 people signed up and 6 people walked the trail independent of the program. It was an exciting and wondrous evening, because for the first time, on this calm, clear, bright night - we heard Owls!

8. Hunting

9. Fishing

10. Trapping

11. Wildlife Observation

- On February 23, Project Leader Oliveira and Deputy Project Leader Kennedy met with Wayland Conservation Commission members Carol Gumbart and Ken Moon, and local resident and refuge volunteer Barbara Howell to discuss wildlife observation trails which cross the Great Meadows NWR on the Doty tract and connect to Town lands. The Commission is interested in entering into an MOA with the Complex to maintain these trails on the refuge for the purpose of foot travel for wildlife viewing. A future meeting is planned to work out the particulars of the MOA. This activity was found to be compatible during the compatibility review on the refuge.

12. Other Wildlife Oriented Recreation

- Canoe paddlers were observed on the Sudbury River on Feb. 25.

13. Camping

14. Picnicking

15. Off-Road Vehicling

16. Other Non-Wildlife Oriented Recreation

17. Law Enforcement

- The annual LE report was completed. Report from the Concord Police Dept. showed a significantly lower number of incidents in CY 1997 than in prior years. Sudbury Police reported no offenses recorded on the Sudbury portion of the refuge in CY 1997.

18. Cooperating Associations/Friends Groups

- A board meeting of the SuAsCo Watershed Association and refuge staff has been scheduled for March 4.
- ROS Ware attended the Friends of Monomoy's monthly board meeting on 2/13/98.

19. Concessions

I. Equipment and Facilities

1. New Construction

2. Rehabilitation

- Work is progressing on the facilities rehabilitation project at John Hay NWR. The Offices of Contracting and Engineering are investigating the possibility of utilizing an architectural and engineering firm which is under contract to the National Park Service to prepare a current needs assessment and cost estimate for the facilities. By using this firm, the Service can save approximately 2 months time which would have been spent in the contracting process. Actual rehabilitation work is not expected to begin until 1999 due to the short work season, with the exception of the asbestos abatement which is planned for 1998.
- An abandoned home on the Strand tract was torn down and removed.
- Work has begun on the demolition of the log cabin, photo blind and boat house at the Concord Unit of Great Meadows NWR (MMS project). A single steel structure is planned to replace the two storage building.

3. Major Maintenance

- At Monomoy, the weather station septic system was serviced and the access improved. Prior to the Service's recent acquisition of this building, the system was the responsibility of the Weather Service. Information about the system was minimal, so locating, servicing, and making minor improvements proved somewhat costly. Future servicing should be easier.
- Estimates for replacing an existing boneyard stockade fence with a chain link fence at Monomoy were solicited by refuge staff and forwarded to Engineering for consideration. This is a 1998 MMS project.

4. Equipment Utilization and Replacement

- The Complex received a 1998, ½-ton Dodge 4x4 pickup truck in February. The truck was purchased with year end funds in FY 1997.
- The annual property inventory was completed. Two outboard motors will be surveyed.

5. Communication Systems

Energy Conservation

Other

On February 2, Project Leader Oliveira and Refuge Operations Kimbrough traveled to John Hay NWR to view damage done to trees and buildings (minor) as a result of the January ice storm which hit New Hampshire. The storm mainly damaged trees lining the entrance drive and around the main house. While there, they also reviewed programs for the coming year with Friends of John Hay Executive Director Maggie Stier.

J. Other Items

Cooperative Programs

Deputy RM Kennedy attended the Concord Conservation Coffee on February 3.

2. Items of Interest

- On February 11, Project Leader Oliveira met with Legislative Aid Betsy McEvoy from Senator John Kerry's Office. Oliveira briefed Ms. McEvoy on issues within the Complex including the Monomoy NWR controversy. Ms. McEvoy appears to be a friend of the refuge.
- Project Leader Oliveira also met with Constituent Outreach Specialist Suzanne Morse from Senator Edward Kennedy's Office. Oliveira updated Ms. Morse on the happenings to date regarding Monomoy NWR.
- On Saturday February 14, Project Leader Oliveira attended the Winterfest at the John Hay NWR. The Friends of John Hay NWR sponsored the event which included snow shoeing, cross country skiing and a clinic on caring for storm damaged trees. Area and University arborists led a group of 35 individuals throughout the refuge discussing remedies for various types of damage.
- On February 24, Project Leader Oliveira met with Director of Appropriations Vasiliki Alexopoulos of Senator Judd Gregg's Office (NH). Oliveira briefed Ms. Alexopoulos on the Complex and the accomplishments to date on the rehabilitation project for the facilities at John Hay NWR. Senator Gregg assisted the refuge in securing \$1 million in

construction funds to rehabilitate the buildings.

- On February 25, Project Leader Oliveira met with Legislative Aide Mimi Brody of Senator Edward Kennedy's Office (MA). Oliveira briefed her on the Complex and land acquisition progress, especially the O'Rourke tract which the Senator has been instrumental in the quest for funding. Ms. Brody was surprised that the Complex had so little a staff to manage 9 national wildlife refuges. Oliveira then presented her with the Monomoy management plan and briefed her on the plan's highlights. The over 1.5 hour meeting went very well.
- On February 25, Project Leader Oliveira met with Legislative Aide Glen Shor of Congressman Marty Meehan's Office (MA-5). Oliveira briefed Mr. Shor on the Complex and activities surrounding the purchase of the O'Rourke tract in Carlisle. Congressman Meehan has been extremely supportive on this acquisition and in seeing the transfer of Army lands to the Great Meadows and Oxbow NWRs.
- On February 25, Project Leader Oliveira met with Legislative Aide Corinne Young of Congressman William Delahunt's Office (MA-10). Oliveira briefed Ms. Young on the Complex with particular attention on the Mashpee NWR project and Nomans Land Island. The Congressman is interested in having the Service look at the Massachusetts Military Reservation for inclusion in the Mashpee NWR. This 22,000 acre parcel has problems with ground water contamination. Oliveira then briefed Ms. Young on the Monomoy project. Ms. Young said that the Congressman was not going to micro manage the refuge. Oliveira later had the pleasure of meeting Congressman Delahunt.

3. Credits

K. Feedback